

Office Director Meeting  
February 19, 2014  
Note Taker: Melanee Petersen

Information: Leave, Extended Leave Options, Timesheet approvals, deadlines

(1) Amy Spellman FMLA

Cosmetic Surgery not covered by FMLA.

Need to know enough to understand to approve for sick leave or if needing FMLA or extended leave. Staff can call personnel too to find out what is needed or ask basic questions.

Questions to ask staff:

Will you see a medical provider?

Have you had this condition before and when do they expect to return.

Intermittent use can be more dicey and refer to Amy to ask more questions for clarification of leave options and requirements. Personnel may require medical determination.

Amy will share as much as she can with OD, but she may not be able to share all details. When using FMLA should code in QE2 as FMLA.

Staff will need to use what is available to them in medical and sick leave and then request sick leave advancement and can only request up to three months and needs to be approved by Mark. This should be done prior to leave if possible. Need to let staff know if you will support or not and Mark is the final decision maker. HR is not involved with approval of with leave advancement. Advance sick leave or vacation can be used for other family members not just the employee.

OD may not support leave advancement:

- Continually requesting

- Misuse of leave

Approval of Leave advancement and staff person does not come back they owe back wages to the State Office.

No guaranteed it will be approved. Have to earn it all back before staff person can request additional leave advancement.

Can ask for catastrophic leave donations if necessary and staff person has to be employed one year and out for 30 calendar days. Only for employees not family members.

Personnel usually makes two request for catastrophic leave.

Staff will need to exhaust all sick leave and vacation leave prior to request the need for catastrophic leave.

While employees are on extended leave set a standard check in time with them. Have them check in with you once a week or every two weeks or if they will need to extend their leave time State Office would need to know ahead of time.

\*\*\*\*If person is going to be out for more than 3 days we need to let Cinda know!!!!

\*\*\*\*\*When have to alter time sheet for staff person make sure to re-approve and let CINDA know that it has been re-approved to not to create issues in NIS!

Time sheets due 4th working day of the month!!!! Cinda submits 5th day. OD's please make sure you are timely and get this done on time. All staff have to be submitted prior to submitting as an agency to NIS.

Side Note Amy: Performance Reviews:

\*\*\*\*\*OD's need to put reminder on schedule for all probationary reviews!!!! Amy will send when they are due in a list form to OD's and then OD's are responsible for putting reminders on their calendars to complete probationary reviews. Pat Bracken sends out reminders too.

Years of Service with VR Announcements:

5 years is Kim Simmons  
20 years of service Deb Dixon

(Updates Federal) Mark:

Reauthorization no progress at this time and still in process of negotiating with both sides. Senate not in support of move NDE to Labor. House version and Senate versions are very different at this point. Mark will keep us updated.

Supported employment language references VR as starting point for SE. This is not being supported at this time and requesting revision to have it revised.

Move IL to HHS is being discussed.

New Commissioner in now on board and Mark talked with the Commissioner about Project Search and Certificate programs. He will be meeting with schools and Mark wanted him updated to what we have to offer in reference to training options from VR. We could be used as a model with GI schools for our programs. The Commissioner will be going to Lincoln case service office and meeting with staff.

Next week Mark will be meeting with State of Vermont and discuss the Progressive Employment Model and developing a model for NE VR to start with Lincoln transition schools as a pilot. Also, looking at volunteering as an option for transition students to gain experience. In addition, VR has established insurance for unpaid OJE experiences and we have insurance for OJE/OJT's that are paid. What is the coverage if we have to explain to employers? For now it's 50,000 per person for coverage for accidental death and dismemberment. We can also use some case service dollars if needed for additional monies. This is an option we hope not to have to use as not sure of all the legalities. Once OJE is set up with paper work and submitted, client will be automatically covered.

MY VR will be pilot will be wrapping up. Norfolk and GI are doing the pilots for MyVR. Will be looking at Virtual Assistant to enhance communication between clients and staff. Mark mentioned he had met with 9 other states to provide update with My VR and who also helped with funding for this pilot project. Also, North Carolina looking at Nebraska's team approach.

This is a credit to what we are doing and what we are doing within our teams. Thanks to all!

Mark demonstrated Data Dashboard. State Office will put out within the next two to three weeks. This will be eventually available to all VR staff. After a few changes Dashboard will be coming out in the next few weeks. Can look at each team individually. Staff will be able to look at tracking outcomes and who is taking them. Can also look individually by staff person not just by office. Will need to define disability categories more specific to really get an accurate view of who we are serving. Can also see High Cost where we are spending our money across the State. Also looking at SS and who is being served and how much we are getting back through reimbursement.

\*\*\*OD's please send input to Mark, so he can get info back to Elizabeth/Data Team your ideas or suggestions. Very transparent for everyone and this helps with accountable with teams and team members.

Soon, OD's will be given access to the website to view Dashboard and the provide feedback to Elizabeth/Data Team. Next step will be to be to allow staff to have access. The staff person who is listed as contact person of the case will get credit at time of closure.

#### Discussion Items:

##### (1) 30 Day Contact Policy

Gordon believes 30-day contact is a good thing, but need to allow for exceptions. Nothing built in rule to address this. People leave area and come back, or post secondary are two examples of when a staff person may not be able to contact the person within a 30-day timeline. VR may need to look at adding exceptions. Mark mentioned this guideline came out from VR Leadership Council meeting and he will introduce it again to the group to revisit and to get input for rationale for exceptions, but focus still remains 30-day contact was for accountability to keep clients moving.

\*\*\*If you have concerns, send list of concerns to Mark and will draft and outline for Leadership to take a look at during the meeting.

##### (2) Update on Violent & Disruptive Policy Judy, Vicki, Larry, Kim

Discuss training for writing an emergency plan for teams.

Larry:

Larry spoke with State Patrol person and they suggested very common sense things to consider for this topic. Larry sent a list of safety consideration to all OD's and possibly have a person come to each office to address concerns. Let Larry know if other offices would rather have another person come to team and address security issues if preference in not State Patrol. Gordon mentioned that the local police office from Scottsbluff would not give specifics due to liability and to look at the website "I love u guys.com" to get ideas concerning security issues and safety ideas. Group also looked at safety tips and considerations provide by Larry, Judy and Vicki and do we want them attached to current policy?

Judy mentioned we need to work on defusing situations and how to train staff on defusing. Staff recommended to have Dr. Graff come back to provide some training and have him relate presentation to office safety plan ideas. Dr. Graff is open to coming to VR offices.

If you know in advance person has issues with anger or other behaviors, begin to address with consumer so there is an awareness. What needs to be done and when do we stop all call 911.

Gordon concerned about office doing their own security policy. Should we have someone come in and look at each office. Are we trained or have the knowledge to complete this type of policy? If the local police will not assist due to liability issues not sure if he or VR should have that responsibility?

Mark asked the group. Do we need two plans one for evacuation and one for how to defuse a client?

Judy will post what has been updated on policy and put checklist on top along with considerations. OD's should start having some discussions with teams and will discuss training. Think of questions to ask Dr. Graff.

We can edit and make changes if necessary to current policy. Based on discussion, no plan development at this time, but talk with team and possibly each quarter review the team's ideas for emergency/client's situations.

3) Angela is open for case reviews. Contact her if you would like to schedule reviews. What may be helpful to the team. Mark will ask OD's how we are using quality case reviews or case reviews in general. PD will be doing case reviews and give Mark summary's of how each team is doing and if there are issues to bring to forefront and have a discussion at an OD meeting to share what may be occurring with case management in more than one team to learn and share or changes that need to be made in a particular area of case management. This will help maintain quality control.

(4) TAP National employment team put a website together to help people who have a disability to apply for jobs and put their employment/resume information in the data base, so employers can look at resumes when looking to hire. Employers have not been downloaded yet. There are over 300 employers who have paid to get on the website. This may not be for every client and clients will need to have skills. Jobs are mainly outside of Nebraska. Good for college students who may be more willing to relocate.

Jim mentioned that it started with Mark being invited then Jim invited, Jim invited OD's then OD's are to invite your staff with ultimately VR staff inviting clients they believe may benefit from this job search option. Senators see this as an important website and employers will continue to pay to be part of the website and also help employers become compliant with the NEW 503 law. Need a balance of people looking for jobs and employers looking to hire. For now, most jobs will be out of state. Encourage staff to look as possible option for job seekers.

(5) 30-day Employer Contact:

Mark decided if VR did not assist with the placement of a client, we do not need to contact. Several staff have voiced concerns around this topic and feel very strongly that we need to listen to the client and respect their requests for not contacting. This does not happen for the majority of placement cases, but we again need to have an option that will be an exception in situations like this.

(6) Paperwork from Students and Parents Gordon:

Can't get paper work back from students and parents. How do other offices address this was put to the group for discussion. Lots of other teams having the same issue.

Lincoln get application and release and send with return envelope has better success versus giving in schools. Lincoln requested a copy of the letter Amelis's team uses as somewhat of a last attempt to get the necessary (signed) forms back to VR.

Amelis Team: If getting close to date for eligibility incorporated with 15-day letter did get some returned and signed. It was a last resort attempt. Letters were addressed to parents. Requested parents to send forms directly to VR verses the school IEP manager.

Larry's teams:

Also had school help advocate to get the signed forms back to VR. Students may see teachers during school hours more than VR staff and at times can help get the forms returned with signature.

Teri S: They have one school where the staff person has lots of involvement with VR and no problem getting those forms back, but if limited contact with schools it is still an issue and not as successful.

#### (7) Hearing Aids/Eligibility Elaine

Mark will have RSA address our eligibility hearing aid policy and share with us their input and response. Staff have expressed concerns due to some clients not meeting the criteria, but still has a definite need for services. Mark will update as soon as he hears something.

#### (8) Job Placement via Social Media

Clients that struggle with putting job information on line, entering resumes or other data. Larry mentioned that clients come to VR and VR staff sit with them and help them enter information or teach them the how to's and it's very time consuming. Have other offices experienced this program and if so, have you come up with other time saving options. Workforce does not have the time to help with this and have sent individuals to VR offices. What are other offices doing to help clients?

Lisa M :

Workforce sends individuals to VR and they no longer have the man power to help them. In Madison at Tyson Plant, a VR person helped a client 3 times with an applications due to errors and had to redo it. Employer emails it back if not correct or missing information or at times not accepted.

Teri W:

They see the same thing with social media. Some of the on-line is very difficult to maneuver. Are there options in the community to help?  
Can be very time consuming.

Mark stated this is going to be more common and VR needs to be prepared for in the future. There was no specific resolution with this discussion topic, but all VR offices have some of the same concerns with staff time.

#### (9) Training /Amelis

Lots of training due to turnover and there are lots of other office director duties that also need to get done. How are other office directors are using PD's for training? When do I incorporate a PD or do I need to? I am the primary training of their experience and the PD is the support person? Can we come up with PD training guidelines.

Gordon:

He suggested that VR create a position assigned to all teams to provide training. VR used to have a person in years past that provided this service to teams. He believe that if we take a position from Larry we could hire this type of person. Larry no comment.

Deb D :

What is the program piece and what is available for training. Can PD's provide what part of their program that would be an option for new staff. What are the skills on the critical checklist and those should compliment what they get in New Staff training. For example, what is the starting point for training for Evaluation and what is the information or knowledge that should be acquired. Is the training options defined for new staff?

Cheryl:

Program Directors can supplement an Office Director's request for additional training needs with their new staff person. PD's can also help put together training agenda/plan for new staff if necessary. Can bring PD's in as necessary.

Mark stated OD responsible for training plans with new staff. Program Director will support as needed. OD will need to assess what is needed for new staff. Bring up in next DIG meeting to discuss with PD's. Possibly use video conferencing as a training resource to link a staff person who is trained in one area and be a resource and provide training to the new staff person. Mark also talk about teams VC each other for training to share and talk about how they are doing things or talk about training new staff.

Lisa M:

Lisa mentioned other staff can come and visit and work with other team members in speciality area to help with training for new staff. This is a compliment of their work and gets them help others, do something different than their normal work routine and visit a different team. It would be a learning experience for everyone.

Larry N:

Find out staff that are good in different areas like Frank with Eval and then use them around the rest of the State to help with training is another idea.

(10) Possible Rule 72 Revisions.

What type of Exceptions are OD's making ?

What type are being made? Do we need to increase cap amounts or payment structures. 272 total exceptions for all of last year.

Teri W 54

Lisa M. 31

Lincoln Team 30

Amelis L. 30

Kearney 33

Teri S. 33

Gordon 13

Melanee 14

Deb 4,  
Kim 18

#### Top Six Exceptions used by Teams:

- Uniform and work clothing 120
- Vechical repairs 40
- Assistive Devices 21
- Vechicle mods 15 new
- Vehicle mods older car 11
- Lodging and Per diem

Cathy was not able to make the meeting. Mark provide some updates.

Cathy's numbers chart Mark referred to for discussion

allowances and who is using them? This varies across the State.

Increase in abuse for cash advances and maybe VR staff should not use as much and try to authorize to vendors verses the clients.

Lisa M.

Try to use other options besides cash advances if at all possible and set up vendors verses cash advances.

Lincoln:

Trying to limit cash advances with clients if at all possible and again use vendors.

Gordon; Yes, there can be some abuse with case advances, but team's will need this option to get services for clients as not enough vendors to us in Scottsbluff or western end of the state. For examples, gas stations stopped taking authorizations due to the amount of time it takes to get reimbursed by the State.

Larry:

Every attempt not to use allowances is made with the teams, but staff also need to look at each carefully at clients to consider how they may use the cash advance. Do the staff person think the client will use them correctly. Don't take them away, but use more as an exception.

Mark: Please email your input or ideas about change ideas for Rule 72 to Cheryl or Mark. There will be a work group and a draft will be created to use as a draft and then continue to get input. Staff will have options for input too. This is a work in progress.

#### (11) Travel

Again, Cathy has more information and will provide at DIG meeting. Discussion focused on when staff can use their own cars and gets reimbursed for mileage verses using a State car. Mark stated that what they are looking at is if the person will be overnight at the destination, if they are coming for training and chose to take their personal car due to distance. However, they will be paid at a lower rate. If you have other scenarios, please bring to DIG meeting to share with group and get

input as to other options to be considered for personal car use and reimburse.

Calendar NDE was looking in at how VR uses our calendaring system. All VR employees need to make sure they have everything on calendar and if you are going to be in training over night, travel time, appointments etc. We approve travel due to being able to validate staff activities by their work calendars, so we need to make sure staff have all appointments, meetings, trainings or other activities up-to-date and entered on their calendar.

(12) Hold until DIG Meeting Staff Cell Phones. Cathy can provide more information. When a new staff person begins their employment with VR, and the OD is not sure if they will need a landline or a cell phone, it was suggested to contact Sandy Ham to request some temporary cards with the landline phone number until we know if they will need a cell phone verses a landline. This will save VR money by not having to reorder new cards until the final decision on phone type has been decided. VR offices will be responsible for holding onto cell phone if a person leaves. OD's keep phone at local office until OD/staff person decides if staff person will need a cell phone. Don't send cell phone back until you know you will not need the cell phone. If you decide to send back to State Office, please send to Cathy Callaway.

Side note point of interest:

Mark met with Director of Hard of Hearing from Nebraska and had lots of good things to say about how VR staff are providing as services to their clients. He agrees both agencies still have room for improvement, but happy with progress.

Respectfully submitted  
Melanee Petersen